

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 1083

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SUBJECT: PERTINI SI, CRAXI MAYBE NOT

1. SUMMARY. MILAN POLITICIANS CLAIM TO BE SATISFIED WITH NEW PRESIDENT PERTINI AND SAY THEIR PARTIES READY TO SETTLE DOWN AND TRY TO GOVERN COUNTRY FOR AWHILE. EXCEPT MAYBE CRAXI LED SOCIALISTS, WHOSE STRATEGY OF DISRUPTION MAKES PSI BEHAVIOR HARD TO PREDICT. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICIANS ACROSS SPECTRUM HERE HAVE TOLD US THEY ARE SATISFIED THAT NEW PRESIDENT PERTINI IS RIGHT MAN IN RIGHT JOB. THEY CITED HIS CLEAN PAST AND HEROIC RESISTANCT RECORD AND PRAISED HIS INSTALLATION SPEECH AS HAVING HIT JUST RIGHT THEMES. ONLY DISSENT WE GOT WAS FROM INDUSTRIALIST WHO SAID HE HAD HEARD PERTINI SAY IN INTERVIEW THAT TOO-FREQUENT ITALIAN STRIKES WERE EMPLOYERS' FAULT. HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED PRESIDENT WHOSE LEANINGS WERE LESS TO LEFT.

3. WAS PERTINI TOO CLOSE TO COMMUNISTS? ALTHOUGH VOLIBLE COMMUNIST CAB DRIVER TOLD US ENTHUSIASTICALLY THAT NEW PRESIDENT WAS MORE COMMUNIST THAN SOCIALIST, CONSENSUS OF PROS INTERVIEWED HER IS THAT PERTINI IS IN FACT IRASCIBLE LONE WOLF WHO WILL BE IN NOBODY'S HIP POCKET. DC AND PCI MILAN PROVINCIAL
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SECRETARIES BOTH AGREED THAT, DESPITE PERTINI'S LONG FRIENDSHIPS WITH HIS COMMUNIST RESISTANCE COMPANIONS, HE WAS NOT ESPECIALLY CLOSE TO THEM POLITICALLY.

3. NOW WOULD PERTINI BE UNDER PSI THUMB, PARTICULARLY GIVEN WAY HE GOT ALONG WITH CRAXI. PSI MILAN ALDERMAN FOR BUDGET PIER-PAOLO PILLITTERI WHO IS CRAXI'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, WHEN ASKED

HOW RELATIONS WOULD BE BETWEEN CRAXI AND PERTINI, REPLIED, "TELEPHONIC". HE ADDED THOUGH THAT TWO MEN'S FAMILIES HAD KNOWN ONE ANOTHER FOR YEARS AND THEY WOULD FIND SOME WAY TO WORK TOGETHER. ANOTHER SOCIALIST, AN ACADEMIC CLOSE TO CRAXI FACTION, TOLD US STRAIGHT-TALKING PERTINI HAD LITTLE USE FOR OPERATION LIKE CRAXI. ALL AGREED THAT SWEET SMELL OF PSI SUCCESS IN GETTING SOCIALIST ELECTED PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE BEEN SWEETER FROM CRAXI'S VIEWPOINT HAD MAN NOT BEEN PERTINI.

4. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NOW THAT PRESIDENT HAD BEEN ELECTED AND GOVERNMENT COULD GET BACK TO BUSINESS? WHICH PARTY WOULD THROW FIRST STONE?

5. NOT US, SAID MILAN DC SECRETARY FRIGERIO. DC IN HIS VIEW HAD COMMUNISTS JUST WHERE IT WANTED THEM. THE LONGER THE PCI WAS MADE TO SUPPORT MODERATE POLICIES AND HAD AS CONSEQUENCE TO SUFFER LOSSES ON ITS LEFT, THE BETTER. SO DC HAD NO INTEREST IN CHANGING THINGS FOR MOMENT.

6. PCI SECRETARY AUGUSTO CASTAGNA SAID IT WOULD NOT BE HIS PARTY EITHER TO UPSET THINGS, EVEN THOUGH, HE ADMITTED, PCI WAS IN UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION AND MIGHT WELL CONTINUE TO LOSE VOTES I N SHORT RUN. BUT PCI WOULD NOT MAKE QUICK TACTICAL SWITCH TO LEFT. IT WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO HELP GOVERN COUNTRY
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RESPONSIBLY IN PURSUIT OF HISTORIC COMPROMISE. SEEN FROM LONGER PERSPECTIVE PARTY WAS ON COURSE AND WAS NOT INTERESTED IN PROVOKING RUPTURE IN PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT.

7. SOCIALIST PILLITTERI SAW IT DIFFERENTLY. BEFORE CHRISTMAS, HE SAID, UNION PRESSURE ON PCI WOULD BE SO INTENST THAT PARTY WOULD BE FORCED TO MAKE UNACCEPTABLE DEMANDS ON OTHER PARTIES OF MAJORITY.

8. AND WHAT ABOUT SOCIALISTS? ALTHOUGH NO ONE FORESAW CRAXI PULLING OUT OF PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE, EVERYONE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CRAXI RIDING HIGH AND SAID THAT, GIVEN THE NEGATIVE AND REACTIVE NATURE OF HIS PRESENT APPROACH, HE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNPREDICTABLE.

9. SOME SAW THAT AS DESIRABLE OR AT LEAST INEVITABLE. WHAT ELSE, SAID CRAXI'S BROTHER-IN-LAW PILLITTERI, CAN WE DO? WE NEED TO GROW IN ORDER TO COUNT. UNTIL THEN, WE HAVE TO OBSTRUCT HISTORIC COMPROMISE. CRAXI WILL STAY QUIET FOR A FEW WEEKS AND THEN HE'LL BE BACK ON THE ATTACK.

10. CONSERVATIVE PRI CITY COUNCILMAN PIERFRANCO FALETTI AGREED

THAT IT WAS PSI'S JOB TO FOIL HISTORIC COMPROMISE. THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LA MALFA'S ROLE BUT LA MALFA DIDN'T ACCEPT IT. NOW CRAXI WAS ASSUMING WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LA MALFA'S RESPONSIBILITY.

11. OTHERS WERE LESS IMPRESSED WITH CRAXI'S STEWARDSHIP. PSI DEPUTY GAETANO ARFE, HISTORY PROFESSOR WHOSE BASE IS PARMA AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE WITHIN PARTY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COMPLAINED THAT CRAXI WAS SECRETIVE MANIPULATOR WHO IMPROVISED POLICY FROM DAY TO DAY. CRAXI COULD NOT CONTINUE HIS RISKY INITIATIVES (AS IN MORO AFFAIR) INDEFINITELY WITHOUT GETTING BURNED. TOP-LEVEL PSI MEETINGS, SAID ARFE, NEVER DISCUSSED ECONOMIC AND OTHER POLICY STRATEGY BUT WERE CALLED ONLY ON AD HOC BASIS FOR SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. PSI
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FORAYS INTO ECONOMIC QUESTIONS WERE CONDUCTED BY INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM CRAXI HAD GIVEN GREEN LIGHT BUT WITH NO INTRA-PARTY DEBATE OR COORDINATION. IT WAS NOT WAY TO RUN A PARTY.

12. COMMENT. VIEW FROM MILAN AS PRESIDENTIAL JOCKEYING ENDS AND VACATIONS BEGIN IS THAT PSI SECRETARY CRAXI WILL BE MAN TO WATCH OVER COMING MONTHS. HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING SOCIALIST PARTY MOVING AGAIN. QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER HE CAN MAKE IT CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE IN GOVERNING COUNTRY. ON BASIS OF WHAT WE SEE HERE, CHANCES LOOK LESS THAN GOOD.
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